

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 IO-13 /080 W

-----013902 300634Z /10

R 291311Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7680

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TS, ET

SUBJ: ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT LEADER VISITS TUNIS

1. OSMAN SALLE SABBE, ERRONEOUSLY IDENTIFIED IN PRESS AS PRESIDENT OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT, WAS IN TUNIS JULY 20 - 27. (SABBE IS ACTUALLY HEAD OF ELF POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES.) IN AIRPORT ARRIVAL STATEMENT HE SAID HE WAS MAKING A TOUR OF ARAB COUNTRIES TO EXPLAIN SUCCESSES OF ERITREAN REVOLUTION AND PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT HERE WAS APPARENTLY TO SOLICIT FINANCIAL, MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN CAUSE FROM GOT. DURING COURSE OF VISIT, WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY WAS NOT DESCRIBED AS "OFFICIAL" IN TUNISIAN MEDIA, SABBE IS KNOWN TO HAVE MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY AS WELL AS TWO ASSISTANT DIRECTORS OF TUNISIA'S RULING PSD PARTY. THERE WAS NO REFERENCE TO ANY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, WHICH SABBE STATED

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WAS ONE OF HIS PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES.

METW TTYH PMENT GIVEN VISIT WAS MODEST AND GENERALLY NONCOMMITTAL, ALTHOUGH SABBE DID HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE AT PSD PARTY HEADQUARTERS ON JULY 26.

2. IN PRESS CONFERENCE SABBE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT ALL ERITREA HAS BEEN LIBERATED WITH

EXCEPTION OF THREE CITIES, AND THAT THOSE WERE AT THE POINT OF FALLING. HE ALSO STATED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE UNDER WAY TO BRING ABOUT UNIFICATION OF THE THREE FACTIONS WHICH CONSTITUTE ERITREAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT, ALTHOUGH TO DATE THE "POPULAR LIBERATION FRONT" FACTION HAS REJECTED SUCH EFFORTS. THESE EFFORTS WOULD CONTINUE, HE SAID, AS SUCH POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN MILITARY OPERATIONS. HE CLAIMED THAT ERITREAN PEOPLE WOULD FIGHT AGAINST ETHIOPIA NOT ONLY BECAUSE PRESENT ETHIOPIAN REGIME IS REACTIONARY, BUT BECAUSE ETHIOPIA OCCUPIES ERITREAN SOIL.

3. SPEAKING OF THE PROBLEMS OF UNIFYING THE THREE LIBERATION FACTIONS, SABBE SAID THE "POPULAR LIBERATION FRONT" VIEWS THAT MULTIPLE ORGANIZATIONS ARE CALLED FOR, WHILE "REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL" OF ELF AND "POPULAR FORCES OF LIBERATION" OF ELF BELIEVE UNITY IS NEEDED IN ORDER TO OVERCOME "DIFFERENT TENDENCIES". THESE LATTER GROUPS BELIEVE THAT A SOLE ERITREAN ORGANIZATION MUST BE ESTABLISHED BEFORE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF ERITREA WHICH WILL BE 50TH STATE TO JOIN OAU AND 23RD TO JOIN ARAB LEAGUE.

4. SABBE APPEALED TO ALL ARAB STATES TO INCREASE THEIR FINANCIAL, MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN CAUSE, AND ACCORDING TO RELIABLE FOREIGN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CORRESPONDENT PRESENT AT NEWS CONFERENCE, HE CLAIMED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY HAD EXPRESSED GREAT READINESS TO SPONSOR ERITREAN ENTRY INTO UNITED NATIONS. GOT PRESS AGENCY, TAP, IN ITS NEWS RELEASE ON INTERVIEW QUOTED SABBE ONLY AS SAYING THAT CHATTY HAD PROMISED TO "RAISE" ERITREAN PROBLEM AT UN.

5. COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT COMMITMENTS CHATTY MIGHT HAVE GIVEN PRIVATELY, BUT GOT HAS NOT COMMENTED OFFICIALLY ON SABBE'S VISIT. SABBE MAY HAVE SAID MORE AT PRESS CONFERENCE THAN GOT THOUGHT APPROPRIATE, HOWEVER, AS JULY 27 PAPERS PUBLISHED TAP'S SANITIZED VERSION OF HIS REMARKS ONLY AND WITHOUT COMMENT. BRIEF ARTICLE IN JULY 28 PAPERS NOTED MERELY THAT SABBE AND DELEGATION HAD LEFT TUNIS ON PREVIOUS DAY, AT WHICH TIME HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH LEVEL OF SUPPORT AND COMPREHENSION DEMONSTRATED BY TUNISIAN OFFICIALS AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT CAUSE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. SABBE'S NEXT STOP WAS DAMAS.
MULCAHY

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